

EXHIBIT 13
DATE 1-29-07
HB 2

Brown, Shirley K. (HHS)

From: shirley & charly [cfjshirl@amerion.com]
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2007 8:02 AM
To: Brown, Shirley K. (HHS)
Cc: Peterson, Mary
Subject: Support for CFSD Budget

To: The Joint Subcommittee for Human Services Appropriations
Representative Edith Clark, Chair

Representative Clark and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of the Child & Family Services budget request as presented to this committee. Although I support the entire budget request, I want to speak specifically to the areas of Foster Care Caseload increases, Additional Field Staff and Provider Rate increases.

I have been a member of a Foster Care Review Committee (FCRC), in Missoula County since 2004. This mandated committee reviews all children in care every six months to assure that they are receiving appropriate services and that return to their parents or other permanency options are being pursued in a timely manner. Our FCRC meets monthly. In 2004, it was common for us to review between 5 - 7 cases at each meeting. In the past several months, our review list frequently contains 8 - 10 cases. Our Committee is only one of several who meet monthly in Missoula County for the purpose of case review. Drugs such as alcohol and methamphetamine are involved in a large percentage of cases involving children in care. Parental recovery from "meth" use is slow and laborious. If children's needs are to be met, there must be sufficient funding for these increases.

There is no doubt that additional field staff is needed. Several studies and workload analysis have been done regarding field staff needs. All of them have clearly stated that CFSD has been and continues to be, lacking sufficient numbers of field staff. As well as increasing in size, child protection cases are increasingly more complicated and difficult. When "meth", often accompanied by excessive alcohol use is involved, children stay longer in care to protect their safety. When caseloads are too large, caseworkers must prioritize their time, often only responding to crises. When caseloads are too large, caseworkers experience "burnout", resulting in excellent workers leaving the field of child protection.

Due to previously mentioned reasons, provider rates need to be increased to reflect the intensity of problems that abused children experience as well as the increased length of out-of-home placement. Well-trained and committed foster families and group home staff are necessary to meet the needs of children placed in their care. If excellent care givers are to be

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retained, they must receive adequate compensation.

Respectfully submitted,
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